

Building Competency  
with Words Occurring  
50 Times or More

# BIBLICAL HEBREW VOCABULARY *in* CONTEXT

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# Introduction

## What is a Contextual Vocabulary List?

A contextual vocabulary list is comprised of texts with vocabulary words already memorized by a student. The selected texts are designed to reinforce basic vocabulary by studying those words “in context.” In this resource, we have identified and selected 195 verses or verse fragments from the Hebrew Bible that contain all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible. We have glossed those few words (only 56!) that appear less than 50 times. Proper names appear in gray text for ease of identification. If a student has successfully memorized all Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible, he or she should be able to work through each of the texts that appear in this list without the use of a lexicon.

## Why Study Vocabulary in Context?

It’s one thing to memorize a vocabulary word on a vocabulary card without any other context, something like נָתַן (to give) or נָכָה (to strike). It’s another thing entirely to see that same word “in context” and make the connection between the inflected form and its lexical form, as in לְתֵת (in order to give) or וַיִּךְ (and he struck). Unless a student can identify inflected forms in context and connect them with their vocabulary memorization, they will struggle to read and enjoy Hebrew. Additionally, seeing words in context helps the student to understand the range of meaning Hebrew words can have.

By encountering Hebrew vocabulary in context, students will strengthen their memorization of a word’s meaning and improve the time it takes to recall that meaning. Additionally, studying Hebrew vocabulary in context allows for students to make connections between words that will facilitate memorization. For example, in Gen 12:6 there is a list of animals (sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, and camels). By studying the names of these animals together in context, students are better able to store and recall this information.

To read Hebrew well takes practice, lots and lots of practice. Each year, students ask what they should do to improve their Hebrew skills. The answer is always the same. Read more Hebrew! Reading Hebrew is what makes you better at reading Hebrew. We recognize, however, that unguided immersion into the Hebrew Bible is a daunting task, especially for the beginner. This is why we have created a contextual vocabulary list. Students will be encouraged by working with a list that has been designed to improve their skill in reading, one of the great joys of studying a classical language like Hebrew.

### **How Do You Use a Contextual Vocabulary List?**

You read it! A contextual vocabulary list is designed for intermediate Hebrew studies, after a student has mastered the basics of Hebrew grammar and memorized all Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible. The contextual vocabulary list that we have created appears two times in this resource. Each list is identically numbered (1–195) in order to facilitate study.

In the first list, each text appears with a wooden English translation and space to take notes on the Hebrew text. This first list can be used like a workbook. Students can gloss words, comment on difficult morphology, or identify important syntactical constructions by using *Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

The second list appears without English translations and less space for note-taking. This second list is designed to test a student's ability to sight-read the Hebrew text without recourse to a grammar, lexicon, or English translation. The ultimate purpose and design of this resource is to facilitate a student's ability to sight-read all 195 texts that appear in the contextual vocabulary list.

In a classroom context, this list can be used to create vocabulary quizzes that depart from the traditional presentation of a simple lexical form requiring a generic translation from the student. Because the lists are numbered, instructors can assign texts and quiz from appropriate blocks of material that suit the particular needs of various classroom contexts and environments.

This resource is also well-suited for self study. Students studying on their own should select small blocks of texts from List 1, perhaps ten or fifteen texts at a time. After having studied those texts in the first list, students can check their ability to sight-read by using the second list that appears without translations. Once a group of texts has been mastered, students can progress through the remaining texts in the same manner, always keeping in mind the vital importance of reviewing previous material.

By way of encouragement, it is motivating to understand that once a student can identify in context all 642 Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible, he or she will have access to approximately 90 percent of the Old Testament in the original language.<sup>1</sup> Knowing this modest block of vocabulary well should yield significant returns on a student's investment.

## The Lexicon

The lexicon located in the back of this book contains all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that occur 50 or more times in the Hebrew Bible. Its contents are derived from *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019). The numbers that appear in the left-hand column of this lexicon correspond to the numbers in the frequency list of the *Vocabulary Guide* and to those numbers that identify each of the vocabulary cards from *Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

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1. According to the Accordance database, there are 384,059 Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible (excluding proper names, pronominal suffixes, and Aramaic). The 642 Hebrew words studied in this contextual vocabulary list, comprise 348,503 total occurrences, or 89.7% of the Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible.

## List 1

# Hebrew Texts with Translations

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא (created) אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (1)

In a (the) beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

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וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה (2)

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

And God called (to) the light “day” and (to) the darkness he called  
“night” and it was evening and it was morning,  
day one (the first day).

Genesis 1:5

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וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ (be fruitful) (3)

וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

And God blessed them and God said to them,  
“Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth.”

Genesis 1:28a

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־טוֹב מְאֹד (4)

And God saw all that he had made and,  
behold, [it was] very good.

Genesis 1:31a

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (5)

וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

And God finished on the seventh day his work which  
he had done. And he rested on the seventh day.

Genesis 2:2a

וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ (6)

כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

And from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil  
you shall not eat from it. For on the day that  
you eat from it, you will certainly die.

Genesis 2:17



(7) וַיֵּצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאֲדָמָה כָּל־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת

כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאָדָם לִרְאוֹת מִה־יִּקְרָא־לּוֹ וְכָל־אִשֶּׁר

יִקְרָא־לּוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ:

And Yahweh God formed from the ground every living creature of the field and every bird of heaven. And he brought [them] to the man to see what he would call it [them]. And whatever the man called [each] living creature, that was its name.

Genesis 2:19

(8) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עֵצָם מֵעֵצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי

לִזֹּאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ־זֹאת:

And the man said, "This is now, bone from (of) my bones and flesh from my flesh. She (this one) will be called 'woman' because she (this one) was taken from man."

Genesis 2:23

(9) עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ

וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

Therefore, a man will leave his father and his mother and he will cleave to (be united with) his wife and they will become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24

(10) וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה:

And he (Yahweh) said, "What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother is crying out to me from the ground."

Genesis 4:10

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(11) וַנֹּחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

And Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

Genesis 6:8

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(12) וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס:

And the earth was ruined (had become corrupt) before God.  
And the earth was filled with violence.

Genesis 6:11

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(13) וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בִשְׁבַעַה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ יִבֹּשֶׁה הָאָרֶץ:

And in the second month, on the twenty seventh day of the month, the earth had dried up.

Genesis 8:14

## List 2

**Hebrew Texts  
without  
Translations**

(1) בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא (created) אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

Genesis 1:1

(2) וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

Genesis 1:5

(3) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ (be fruitful)

וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

Genesis 1:28a

(4) וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־טוֹב מְאֹד

Genesis 1:31a

(5) וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

Genesis 2:2a

(6) וּמֵעַץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ

כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

Genesis 2:17

- (7) וַיֵּצֶר (he formed) יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאָדָמָה כָּל־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת  
כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאָדָם לִרְאוֹת מִה־יִּקְרָא־לּוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר  
יִקְרָא־לּוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ:

Genesis 2:19

- (8) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עֵצָם מַעֲצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי  
לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ־זֹאת:

Genesis 2:23

- (9) עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ  
וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

Genesis 2:24

- (10) וַיֹּאמֶר מָה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל דְּמִי אָחִידְךָ צַעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאָדָמָה:

Genesis 4:10

- (11) וְנָח מִצָּא חַן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

Genesis 6:8

- (12) וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס:

Genesis 6:11

# Hebrew-English Lexicon

This lexicon contains all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that occur 50 or more times in the Hebrew Bible. Its contents are derived from *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019). The numbers that appear in the left-hand column of this lexicon correspond to the numbers in the frequency list of the *Vocabulary Guide* and to those numbers that identify each of the vocabulary cards from *Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

# א

- 34      אב father, ancestor; (ms cstr) אָבִי; (mp) אֲבוֹת (1,210)
- 237      אבד (Q) to perish, vanish, be(come) lost, go astray; (Pi) cause to perish, destroy; (Hi) exterminate (185)
- 606      אבה (Q) to be willing, consent, yield to, want something (54)
- 549      אביון (adj) poor, needy (61)
- 171      אבן (fs) stone; (fp) אֲבָנִים (276)
- 62      אדון lord, master; (of God 439x) אֲדֹנָי Lord (774)
- 91      אדם man, mankind, humankind (546)
- 202      אדמה ground, land, earth (222)
- 582      אדן base, pedestal (57)
- 206      אהב (Q) to love (of human and divine love); (Pi ptc) lover (217)
- 139      אהל tent (348)
- 147      או (conj) or (321)
- 552      אולם porch; also spelled אֵילָם (61)
- 436      און iniquity, wickedness, evildoer (81)
- 447      אוצר treasure, treasury, storehouse (79)
- 332      אור (cs) light, daylight, sunshine (120)
- 448      אות (cs) sign, mark, pledge; (cp) אֹתוֹת (79)
- 288      אז then, since, before (141)
- 233      אֶזְנִי (fs) ear; (fd cstr) אֶזְנֵי (188)
- 76      אח brother; (ms cstr) אָחִי; (mp) אֲחִים (629)
- 45      אחד one; (fs) אַחַת (976)
- 335      אחות sister, relative, loved one (119)
- 534      אחז (Q) to seize, grasp, take hold (of), hold fast (63)
- 518      אחזה property, possession (66)
- 256      אחר (adj) other, another; (fs) אַחֶרֶת (166)

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and Gary D. Pratico**

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*Basics of Biblical Hebrew Workbook*

*Charts of Biblical Hebrew*

*Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew*

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*The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*

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